

Sarah's Chocolate-Peanut Butter Hearts

Makes: 36 to 42 one-ich hearts

Peanut Butter Filling Ingredients:

1 cup creamy peanut butter (not old-fashioned)
¼ cup (half-stick) salted butter, very soft
¼ cup granulated sugar
2 teaspoons pure vanilla extract
½ teaspoon table or fine sea salt (if using unsalted butter, add 1 teaspoon salt)
2 cups powdered sugar



Chocolate coating:

2 cups milk or semi-sweet chocolate chips or pieces
1 teaspoon vegetable oil
¼ cup dark or white chocolate chips or pieces, for drizzling (optional)

Topping suggestions:

Flaky sea salt, festive sprinkles, edible gold leaf, shredded coconut, finely chopped nuts

Directions:

In a large bowl, add the peanut butter, butter, sugar, vanilla and salt. Use a stand mixer with the paddle attachment or a handheld mixer to beat on medium speed until smooth and creamy, about 1 minute. Scrape down the sides and bottom of the bowl.

With the mixer on low speed, add the powdered sugar, ¼ cup at a time, until fully incorporated and the mixture appears coarse and crumbly.

Place a piece of parchment paper on a work surface and transfer the peanut butter mixture onto it. Use your hands to press the mixture into a rectangle until it is approximately ½ to ¾ inch thick (or your desired thickness). Place a piece of parchment on top of the rectangle and use a rolling pin to smooth the surface.

Transfer the parchment paper with the filling onto a baking sheet and chill in the refrigerator for 15 minutes to firm it up.

Line another baking sheet with parchment paper. Remove the mixture from the fridge and use a small heart-shaped cutter to cut out the hearts, then place them on the other baking sheet. Gather up the scraps and repeat until all the filling is used.

Chill the hearts in the freezer for at least 30 minutes before dipping in chocolate. Once firm, the peanut butter hearts can be dipped in melted chocolate or transferred to an airtight container and frozen for up to 2 months.

To dip the hearts:

Line a baking sheet with parchment or wax paper; set aside.

Place the chocolate chips or pieces in a medium, heatproof bowl. Melt the chocolate in the microwave on high in 20-second intervals. Once the chocolate begins to melt, stir after each interval until it is fully melted. Add the vegetable oil and stir until incorporated.

Remove the peanut butter hearts from the freezer and dunk them in the melted chocolate until they are fully submerged. Use a fork to remove the hearts, tapping it several times against the bowl's rim and then scraping the bottom along the edge so that the excess chocolate drips back into the bowl. Transfer the dipped hearts to the prepared baking sheet and continue until all the hearts are coated. If you are adding decorative toppings now (without a drizzle or dark or white chocolate), work in batches of 4 and add the toppings before the chocolate hardens.

Chill the hearts in the refrigerator until the chocolate is fully set, about 20 minutes before storing or adding a drizzle of dark or white chocolate.

For the decorative chocolate drizzle:

Place the chocolate chips or pieces in a small bowl and melt in the microwave on high for 20 second intervals, stirring after each, until the chocolate is fully melted. Use a spoon or piping bag to drizzle the chocolate over each heart, working back and forth just past each side for smooth lines. Add any decorative toppings immediately before the chocolate sets.

Once decorated, store the hearts in an airtight container in the refrigerator for up to 2 weeks or in the freezer for up to 2 months.

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